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E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE
PARISH CHURCH
OF
ST. ANNE, WESTMINSTER,
ON
THURSDAY the 23d of APRIL, 1789,
BEING
THE DAY APPOINTED
FOR A
GENERAL THANKSGIVING
TO
ALMIGHTY GOD
FOR HIS

Merciful Interposition in delivering our Most Gracious SOVEREIGN
from a grievous Illness with which he had been afflicted.

By JOHN JEFFERSON, M. A.

Lecturer of the said Parish, and late FELLOW of ST. PETER'S
COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

L O N D O N:

Printed for JOHN STOCKDALE, opposite Burlington,
House, PICCADILLY.

M.DCC.LXXXIX.

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S E R M O N, &c.

P S A L M xxi. 1, 2.

THE KING SHALL REJOICE IN THY STRENGTH,
O LORD, EXCEEDING GLAD SHALL HE BE OF
THY SALVATION: THOU HAST GIVEN HIM
HIS HEART'S DESIRE.

HUMAN nature never appears, perhaps,
to more advantage, than when we see a
person, exalted by the highest distinctions of
earthly grandeur, acknowledging a pious de-
pendence on the Supreme of the Universe, and
uniting in his character the humility and virtue
of religion with all the rank and splendour of
the highest station in society. His situation in-

spires deference and respect, his virtues command our reverence and love.

The author of this Psalm was, perhaps, both in prosperity and adversity, the greatest pattern of a just confidence in his God that ever lived. Though at times surrounded with every enjoyment that could divert the mind into a listless state of forgetfulness and ease, he was ever meditating on the repeated instances of God's goodness, and thankfully reflecting on the result of the divine favour: "I will remember," says he, "thy wonders of old, I will meditate on all thy works, and talk of thy doings, because thou hast been my help." The grateful sense he had of the mercies of the Divine goodness naturally led him to a public acknowledgement, and has left him a great example of praise and thanksgiving to succeeding generations—an example, which we congratulate our fellow-subjects, they behold in the living character of him, whose laws they obey; who, on this day, gives but a public proof of that piety and gratitude to God, which he displays
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in private on every occasion : and so singular, so public a mercy, cannot but deserve a public praise. The mercy which has been exercised, particularly to our Sovereign, is extended generally to us. Inspired therefore by the influence of his devout praise, shall our hearts pass a day so signalized in silent gratitude? Shall not, rather, our tongues join with our hearts in celebrating “ the goodness of the Lord, and in
 “ declaring the wonders that he doth for the
 “ children of men.” We are certainly all of us concerned in the good constitution of the kingdom, and obliged thankfully to adore that Almighty Power, by which it is preserved in dangers, and continued in safety. We all partake in the advantages of civil society, and are bound most heartily to offer up our thanksgivings at all times to God for his singular and continued mercies to our nation, but how much more for a particular interposition in restoring him, whom, whilst we love as a Man, we almost adore as our King, and with whose restoration, order and peace are returned. Such being the connection, the advantages reciprocal,

the interests mutual and common, can we live at ease when he is in pain? Can we be happy when he is unfortunate? Well, therefore, might St. Paul exhort us to “make prayers for kings, and all that are in authority, that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.” If to pray for a blessing be an indispensable duty, it must be still more incumbent on us to thank God, when he vouchsafes to bestow it. The health and welfare of our Monarch is a public benefit, no argument therefore can be wanting to prove it a necessary obligation to thank the bountiful donor for his goodness and mercy.

All “God’s judgements,” it is true, “are unfearchable, and all his ways past finding out,” yet in every thing, I trust, we believe a Providence, but in this we have seen it. The help of man appeared to be almost in vain: but, “it is better,” says the grateful Author of my text, “to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in man, it is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in princes:”

“the

“ the Lord is our strength and our joy, and is
“ become our salvation. The voice of joy and
“ health is in the dwellings of the righteous, the
“ right hand of the Lord hath brought mighty
“ things to pass.” By his means we are as-
sembled this day to return him thanks for
a mercy that was long the object of our most
earnest wishes and solemn prayers. That those
prayers have been heard, lays upon us an addi-
tional obligation of gratitude—inspires a new
confidence in God—adds a secret joy to our
hearts, that on the humble supplication of the
people their prince is restored—gives a grateful
sensation to every individual who has approached
the throne of grace in sincere intercession, to
reflect that he has discharged a duty, and con-
tributed his part not only to the removal of a
distressing personal affliction, but of a national
calamity. If our humble prayers and sincere
entreaties have met with acceptance in Heaven,
and been the means of procuring us a blessing,
our thankfulness and gratitude must be the
means of continuing it. If our fears have been
awakened by an experience of God’s displeasure,
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our gratitude has been excited by an act of his mercy. While ease and affluence flow on with a smooth and unremitting course, we glide down the current in indolent forgetfulness, are apt to be unmindful of the hand that preserves us from rougher waves, to overlook a superintending Providence, or to consider it with a transient or superficial regard; but when we have suffered by the removal of a blessing, it is then we discern its value, have a lively sense of the goodness of God in restoring it; and must, if there is any thing generous in our tempers, at the same time that we acknowledge his mercy, blush in future to affront his goodness, and tremble to provoke his anger. Every fresh instance therefore of mercy, if improved to its proper use, should produce in us new resolutions of duty and obedience, and whilst we pray for the peace of Jerusalem, we should be careful to remember that the surest way of “seeking
“to do it good,” is to be at peace ourselves with God and men.

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It is unnecessary, I am sensible, to excite the sympathy, or inspire the gratitude of those who hear me, by carrying back our recollection to that sad calamity, which was once the subject of painful complaint to Heaven, but is now the occasion of our sincerest praise. To behold a good man, labouring under the heaviest pressures of bodily affliction, is at all times one of the most affecting dispensations of Providence ; but when that good man is a person from whose situation in life, and under whose influence not only we, but many of our fellow-creatures have enjoyed unnumbered blessings, every feeling of our nature becomes interested, and every emotion of our heart is that of pity and condolence. When we see him deprived of the dignity inseparable from some exalted station, which his worth had merited, and his power had never abused ; when we see those virtues which shone conspicuously in private and domestic life, and which neither the allurements of the world, nor the gaiety, nor adulations of courts could tarnish, obliterated only by disease, the most latent sentiments of humanity necessarily spring forth,

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and the mind is awakened by the tenderest sensations. But when to heighten—to give an additional colouring to this scene of affliction, we behold the sollicitudes of conjugal affection; when we behold anxiety giving a melancholy gloom to the splendour of rank; when we see the afflicted soul absorbed by one mournful event—comfortless amidst all the favours the world can bestow; when we see the tear of affection dwell on the eye, distress, which a beam of pious resignation alone enlivens, depicted on the countenance; when we see an amiable heart almost sinking in despair, yet bravely supporting itself in the sense of religion, in a trust of the Divine mercy, we are led to wonder at those dispensations of Providence, which we cannot explain, and should regret that constitution of nature, which has subjected the good in any case to affliction; did we not know that these trials are but for a moment, that they give to virtue a peculiar lustre, that they “work out an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

But unless to increase our gratitude, this is not a day to recount sorrows, which, blessed
be

be God ! are no more—which are lost in universal joy. If the acclamations of a noble and a generous people ; if marks of love, more distinguished than perhaps the annals of history can parallel in the subjects of other countries, can add a relish to the enjoyment of re-established health, then may our Sovereign boast a recompence for sickness, attendant only on virtue and on worth. If after a long absence from her breast, the exquisite sensation of returning composure and serenity can be increased by the united congratulations of a nation, then must his amiable consort experience on this occasion a joy superior even to that which originates in the tenderest endearments of affection.

We must remember, however, that our joy is to be religious and not extravagant, pious and not excessive. There is a wildness of mirth too apt to be indulged in happy seasons, which instead of raising and elevating, sinks the soul in shame and sorrow : for “ even in laughter,” says the royal preacher, “ the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness.” It is not, therefore, that tumultuous joy which

oppresses and overwhelms the soul, which drowns all the faculties of reason, but it is that sedate and sober pleasure, that rational delight, which a good and religious man feels from a sense of God's favour and protection, which is a grateful offering in return for his loving kindness and mercy. The joy of the holy Psalmist was ever the joy of religion ; when he rejoiced, he rejoiced always in the Lord. " The king," says he, " shall rejoice in thy strength, O Lord, " exceeding glad shall he be of thy salvation ; " thou hast given him his heart's desire, and " hast not denied him the request of his lips." That our joy then may be productive of a long series of blessings to us and to our country, let it appear in that temperate and devout gratitude of praise and thanksgiving, which will fortify our minds against temptations to vice. Let it animate us with a true zeal for the honour of our King, for the peace and prosperity of his kingdoms.

We are blessed with a constitution both mild and secure ; the same laws which protect the possessions of the great and powerful, give
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equal security to that pittance which is too often the only reward of industry and labour—the weak are protected from violence, the poor from oppression and wrong. We live in a land where the groans of slavery are never heard; we breathe an air which bears not to our ears the miserable sound of arbitrary chains, but comes loaded almost in every breeze with some joyful, though, perhaps, rude offering at the shrine of liberty and contented ease. Far from being placed in “a barren and dry land, where “no water is,” our soil, grateful and obedient, rewards with plenty the hand that tills it. The pestilence, the earthquakes, the hurricanes, the famines—the scourges and terrors of other lands, the Divine clemency averts from us. While some European dominions are at this time distracted with the confusion of dissatisfied subjection, whilst others are visited with the desolation of the sword, we are happy in the prospect of peace, and enjoying that peace, are prosperous.

Does a recollection, then, of our general and particular mercies excite an inquiry natural to a generous heart—“how shall I most acceptably
“express

“express my gratitude?” The answer is obvious, and applies itself forcibly to every individual; “Walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” This is a conduct ever acceptable to our Maker; this is the purest sacrifice we can offer; this renders us the peculiar objects of Divine favour, it commands human respect; this is the greatest ornament of the highest station, it is the ornament and glory of the lowest. The piety and virtue, indeed, of the obscure individual may be less observed in this world, but it will not be less rewarded in the next.

Let us all, then, imitate the illustrious example of devotion and gratitude which is this day set us in the person of the best of Sovereigns, and let that devotion be, as it is in him, the source of every social and domestic virtue, so shall we all, down to the meanest of his subjects, be recompensed with a crown of glory. Sicknefs and death are equally the fate of the monarch and the slave: let our confidence then in sicknefs and in death be where alone it can be placed with safety and with comfort, in the *King of Kings*; for “it is he that giveth sal-

" vation unto princes, it is he that keepeth
 " Israel without either flumbering or sleeping,
 " who hath declared that he will help the righ-
 " teous, and that right early; that he will not
 " cast off his people, nor forsake his inheri-
 " tance." Let us bless that God, who after
 the time we have been afflicted hath again be-
 come our comfort; " O, clap your hands, all
 " ye people, shout unto God with the voice
 " of thanksgiving, and give thanks unto the
 " Lord, make known his deeds among the
 " people; O, let your songs be of him, and
 " praise him; let your talking be of all his
 " wondrous works, remember what he hath
 " done, his wonders, and the judgements of
 " his mouth."—Blessed be God! who hath re-
 stored our King to the government of his king-
 doms, who hath given prosperity to our coun-
 try.—Blessed be God, " who hath not cast out
 " our prayer, nor turned his mercy from us."—
 Blessed be God, " who hath turned our heavi-
 " nefs into joy, and hath put off our sackcloth,
 " and girded us with gladness." " Let our
 " mouth speak the praise of the Lord, and let
 " all flesh bless his holy name for ever." " The
 " Lord

“ Lord liveth, and blessed be our rock, and let
 “ the God of our salvation be exalted.” “ Bles-
 “ sed be the Lord God of Israel, who only doth
 “ wondrous work,” and blessed be his glorious
 name for ever and ever. He hath given us a
 religious and benign King ; may he long con-
 tinue him a blessing to his realms. He hath
 raised him from the bed of sickness, he hath
 freed him from a severe indisposition ; may he
 prolong his health, till he comes down to the
 grave, as full of years as of good works ; and
 having been his support in life, may he be his
 guide in death.—May the happy messengers of
 heaven conduct him to those kingdoms, where
 he shall receive a glorious triumph ; a triumph,
 where, instead of the giddy noise of an undif-
 tinguished and undistinguishing populace, a
 numerous choir of exalted angels shall hail the
 happy spirit with joyful acclamations ; and he
 who is the Judge of Kings shall pronounce it
 blessed for ever.

Now to the all-merciful, wise, and omnipo-
 tent God be ascribed, &c. &c.

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